

37. Have the Government officials ever been able to point out and locate where these payable leads are?—Not to my knowledge.

38. Then, in your opinion, it is decidedly speculative whether these blocks reserved for mining purposes will actually prove to be remunerative? Yes; excepting those portions already proved to be remunerative.

*The Chairman:* That is a suggestion: Yes or No.

39. *Mr. Wilson.*] What is your opinion about these blocks paying in the end?—I think the prospect of their proving auriferous *in toto* is very remote indeed. I have already expressed my opinion when I said that probably a quarter of them would be auriferous. I could cut out ground on the sides of creeks that would pay to some extent; but then the great difficulty is to define the course of ancient river-beds where the larger leads are always found, for the surface bears no indication as to their existence. From a geologist's point of view you may form a theory, but unfortunately our geological theories, as far as I know, have not been successful, and we have had all the expense for nothing.

40. Then you think that it is possible to point out likely leads, but the question will exist as to whether they will pay or not. Is it speculative?—Until they are opened up they cannot certainly pay. To answer your question in another way: If we consider the matter from the very beginning of the rushes on the West Coast, when there was a vast male mining population of from twenty to thirty thousand able-bodied miners, who overran the whole country and worked out all the easily-gotten gold, the country was then better prospected than it has been since, and without result. We find that after all these years of working only about 1,000 acres per annum have been worked out by the miners, so 100,000 acres of gold-bearing ground at that rate of working would take us a hundred years to work out.

41. Then, I suppose, we are to infer from this that you consider the amount of land reserved, or proposed to be reserved, in excess of what is required?—It would have been better to cut out actually auriferous creeks, and advertise the other blocks. If there was a *bonâ fide* objection, and the miners could prove that they were auriferous, then withdraw that portion. That is the only system that will work without retarding settlement.

42. Do you mean a system like that would facilitate the gold-mining and open up the country?—Certainly; it would open up the land not required for mining for agricultural and other purposes.

43. Can you give the Committee any idea as to the value of the timber—the average ground covered with timber: what royalty would it yield at about 6d. the 100ft.?—It varies greatly. I knew of one area close to Greymouth that turned out £5 an acre for royalty; it was a very good belt of first-class timber, with good, thick, straight barrels.

44. Is there a considerable area of the ground so reserved that will show timber like that?—It occurs in belts of unequal extent; it is not all of the quality before mentioned.

45. What royalty was that?—I am not sure; I know the owner got £5 per acre for it.

46. Can you tell the Committee what is your opinion in regard to the amount of timber likely to be used for *bonâ fide* mining purposes?—Well, I could not give you that exactly.

47. Do you think that anything like the whole timber would be required for mining?—Nothing like it. In shallow ground no timber is required.

48. Does sluicing-ground require timber?—No. The only timber required would be for sluice-boxes.

49. Should you require to sluice the ground, would the timber be better off it?—Yes; the logs are in the way. I should think myself, as for sluice-boxes and the like, now that transit is so easy, the miner would never saw his timber by hand as in the old days; he would obtain it from the mills along the regular line of rail or road.

50. Can you give the Committee any information as to whether the price of timber has decreased since the construction of railways on the West Coast?—The price of timber has considerably decreased. At one time we had to pay £1 10s. per 100ft. for red-pine, and now it is 6s. 6d.

51. The railway has reduced the price?—Yes.

52. Can you tell the Committee, in your opinion, if this land, now reserved for mining, and consequently excluded from settlement purposes, would at any time be likely to be sought after for settlement and for grazing purposes if these reserves had not been made?—Yes; I consider that all land immediately adjoining the railway will ultimately become settled. Of course, heavily-timbered ground is naturally expensive to get in grass, but it produces splendid grass when once it is cleared. I have no doubt that the whole of the land adjacent to the railway will be taken up in time.

53. You see the boundary of the proposed reserves? Now, these measure, in some cases, nine to twelve miles from the line. Take it on the east side first. Do you think that, in the event of these reserves being made and population excluded from the front of the railway, that the back part will be likely to be settled in any reasonable time?—No; the back will not; it is mountain-top. I do not think it will ever be valuable. Some parts of it may come in for sheep-runs.

54. You would not say that it would be suitable for settlement or likely to be settled owing to the railway being within nine or ten miles of it?—No, certainly not.

55. *The Chairman.*] Mr. Lord, having considerable experience in nearly the whole of the West Coast, gained through your knowledge in acting as mining surveyor, do you think you would be able to mark off those blocks of ground which you think ought to be reserved for mining purposes?—I think I could do so approximately. Of course, there may be deep leads and river-bed formations that are so covered up as to give no surface indications, and these I could not define. The general workings I could—that is, the creek and terrace-ground, and so forth.

56. Suppose you had been employed by the Government, would you have marked off reserves to the extent in the blocks marked yellow?—No.

56A. *The Committee.*] Are those which are actually marked yellow reserved?—*Mr. Wilson:*